

## An RYCT Apprenticeship scheme in Westminster

By Kath Gilfoy

An apprenticeship scheme took place as part of Westminster Arts' Resonate programme for people with dementia and their carers in Summer 2014. Westminster Arts is committed to artist training in the field of dementia. This was the first time that Resonate had run an apprenticeship scheme, though they have run two RYCT projects before (one employing recent apprentices trained under the RYCT scheme in south London). The initial 2-day training course was given by Pam Schweitzer and the 12 week apprenticeship scheme was led by Kath Gilfoy of Resonate and Caroline Baker.



There are nine highly committed apprentices, one of whom was a volunteer on Westminster Arts' last RYCT project. One of them commutes from Yorkshire, and another is a student who is still coming down from university in Leeds since term started. All are very committed to taking the work further in their own professional lives: one is keen to take the RYCT approach to her native Portugal, and another would like to set up a company to provide RYCT sessions. Inevitably some of them have experience of dementia in their own family and are using the experience of the apprenticeship at home.



Last year one of the volunteers made cushions using images of artwork created during the project and photos both brought in from home and taken during the project.

This year is the first time we have asked each apprentice to concentrate on a relationship with one couple and make a piece of artwork with and for them, based on their knowledge of them.



This is ranging from an outsize pack of personalised playing cards for someone who loves bridge, to a large artwork made up of a mosaic of photos, which will be offered both as the front of a book and a wall hanging.

There has been a greater coaching element in this project provided by the group leaders, and the apprentices will be offered further volunteering opportunities – one is already volunteering on a Westminster Arts' mosaic project as part of the Resonate programme.